

The Federal Diary

FAA Aides Face Curbs On Job Shifts

By Jerry Kluttz
Staff Reporter

Upwards of 30,000 Federal Aviation employees may be asked to give up traditional rights to quit their jobs and to work where they please in return for better pay, retirement and other fringe benefits.

Administrator E. R. Quesada is expected to ask Congress in January to permit FAA to operate on a combination civilian-military basis to guarantee ground air control services to both civilian and military aviation in peace and war. The law that created FAA a year ago requires the agency to recommend a personnel plan to Congress by next Jan. 1.

Defense officials are reluctant to transfer their 2095 military air navigation and air control facilities at 337 worldwide locations to FAA unless they can be assured of continuity of operations. About 20,000 military people now man these units which FAA plans to take over, under the law, over a five-year period.

FAA officials are reported to be sharply divided over the extent to which the majority of the agency's employees should be militarized, particularly during peacetime. Generally, however, they are agreed that job freedoms should be restricted during national emergencies.

A 10-man "emergency readiness team" representing all FAA bureaus and offices, has recommended to Quesada

that a Federal Aviation Service (FAS) be created to give "commission-type" appointments to key officials and staff personnel, operating employees such as controllers and maintenance people, and supporting employees. Eventually, the number would exceed 30,000 and they would be appointed and subject to orders from the FAA administrator.

Appointments to FAS, the team recommended, should be subject to these conditions:

- An agreement by the employees to work at such times and places as the administrator may require.

- To give a minimum of six months notice prior to resignation during peacetime. The right to resign would be eliminated whenever the President determines the national defense requires it. Those who leave their jobs during such period could be charged with desertion and subjected to criminal prosecution.

- Appointees would be required to give up all military reserve and National Guard connections. Several thousand FAA employees are reservists. Those selected for FAS would have their accumulated retirement credits frozen on a pro-rata basis either for an immediate cash pay-off, or supplemental retirement payments from FAS.

Penalties Provided

Employees who "willfully" violate their employment agreements would be penalized by the loss of their contributed retirement funds, the loss of credit for past Federal service, and they could be "blackballed" from future civilian Federal employment.

The team report said that "membership in FAS must be sufficiently attractive and rewarding to make its members willing to relinquish for specified periods of time certain normal civilian prerogatives such as the right to quit working for any given employer and the right to choose where employment will be accepted." Along that line, the readiness group proposed these additional benefits for FAS members:

- Severance pay up to a month's salary for each full year of service to those members who are separated through no fault of their own.

- Extra pay over and above present Civil Service rates would be given members either through a percentage increase or by the establishment of a separate grade and classification system for FAS.

- Service in FAS would exempt members from compulsory military service under the Selective Service Act, and FAS service would give its members preference for Federal civilian jobs under the Veterans Preference Act.

- FAS members would be allowed to retire on full annuities at any age after 30 years of service.

- Those transferred to new posts could be paid special allowances to help them pay relocation costs for themselves and their families.

- Employees who complete overseas tours would be returned to this country without loss of pay even though no appropriate or comparable domestic vacancies exist.

- Preemployment and other required medical costs would be paid by FAA.

- The administrator would be empowered to provide housing for employees and their families in those areas where adequate housing is unavailable within the vicinity of FAA facilities.